

Call for Fostering an Entrepreneurial Mindset in TESOL in Higher Education

A Response to Yu Jung Han's "Successfully Flipping the
ESL Classroom for Learner Autonomy"
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*"Everything you want is on the other side of fear."
—Jack Canfield (American author and entrepreneur)*

Several articles published by the *NYS TESOL Journal* (e.g., Chen, 2016; Chu, 2017; Lachance, 2017) have addressed language practice by showcasing "biliteracy," "interlanguage," or "translanguaging." These topics are important for bringing a deeper understanding of multilingual learners' language repertoires. Despite the significance of language/literacy practice, however, there seems to be less discussion on encouraging multilingual learners' creativity or innovative spirit in the process of language learning. One article that attempts to deal with a more creative way of looking at language teaching is Han's (2015) article, "Successfully Flipping the ESL Classroom for Learner Autonomy," in which she emphasizes the significant development of ESL learner autonomy through a flipped classroom model. To promote innovative teaching and learning practices and fill the niche in TESOL, this Reader's Comment approaches the global response to Han's proposal by pushing the field into other directions, such as innovative and "entrepreneurial" initiatives.

Entrepreneurial education has been promoted to encourage entrepreneurial mindset and behavior in higher education (Pihie & Sani, 2009), particularly in the business and science fields with the idea of starting up a business. A *mindset* is defined as a "mental attitude or inclination" by Merriam-Webster; an *entrepreneurial mindset* refers to "the inclination to discover, evaluate, and exploit opportunities" (Bosman & Fernhaber, 2018, p. 13). The word *entrepreneur* originates from the French word *entreprendre*, meaning someone who undertakes a project and increases its value in the process. According to McGrath and MacMillan (2000), the characteristics of an entrepreneurial mindset include the pursuit of new opportunities, enormous discipline, prevention of exhaustion, adaptive execution, and engagement of the energies in their domain. A review of the relevant academic literature also uncovers these themes as characteristics of an entrepreneurial mindset: (a) lifelong learning and openness to change; (b) engagement in a complex and uncertain world; (c) creative and innovative approaches to problem solving; (d) belief and confidence in one's own capacity and competency to be entrepreneurial; (e) desire, motivation, and intention to practice entrepreneurship and behave entrepreneurially; (f) taking initiative and personal responsibility for actions; (g) a pursuit of goal attainment through personal mastery and value creation; (h) recognizing opportunities; (i) grit and perseverance in the face of challenges; (j) taking

risks that lead to learning, growth, and value; and (k) a belief in one's ability to influence (Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, 2017).

Around the world, an entrepreneurial mindset has become critical in education. The European Commission (2012) developed the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and stressed the importance of entrepreneurship education at all levels from primary schools to higher education. UNESCO (2017) has also addressed its importance and proposed designing relevant and innovative entrepreneurship education in East and South Asia. In higher education, many colleges of business and engineering have adopted the concept of the entrepreneurial mindset to prepare their students to be responsible and innovative individuals. Although entrepreneurship is associated with a particular form of business activities, the entrepreneurial mindset is directed toward self-reliant people whose characteristics include willingness to change, initiative, and the ability to identify and develop opportunity (Pihie & Sani, 2009).

Despite the growing worldwide awareness and application of an entrepreneurial mindset, however, the scholarship of TESOL does not seem to be influenced by the innovative movement or trend of entrepreneurship for multilingual learners in higher education. Furthermore, there seems to be a dearth of exploring and developing an entrepreneurial mindset in the research and pedagogy of TESOL. With the recognition of the significant impact such a mindset can provide for multilingual learners, this article discusses the key issues and pedagogical applications of an entrepreneurial mindset and calls for the development of an entrepreneurial mindset for multilingual learners in TESOL in higher education.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset in Higher Education

The most critical issues of developing an entrepreneurial mindset for multilingual learners would be professional development, curriculum, and instruction. According to the P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2015), 21st-century professional development should enable teachers to promote problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity in the classroom and cultivate teachers' capacity to identify individual students' learning styles, strengths, and liabilities. Furthermore, teachers need to develop various strategies (e.g., formative assessments) to meet the needs of diverse students in their development of an entrepreneurial mindset. As for 21st-century curriculum and instruction, an entrepreneurial mindset should be promoted in the context of interdisciplinary themes and key subjects. Learning methods should incorporate the use of supportive technologies, inquiry- and problem-based approaches, and higher order thinking skills, not only in K–12 but also in higher education.

Realistically, though, it may be challenging for educators and teachers to implement the new ideas of an entrepreneurial mindset in the ESL classrooms in higher education. First, the concept of an entrepreneurial mindset is still novel to the field of TESOL; we have primarily been focused on multilingual learners' language development. Multilingual students' entrepreneurial mindset, such as creativity and problem-solving skills, has often been neglected due to the predisposed attention to their language development. Another challenge of promoting an entrepreneurial mindset is a lack of teacher education with regard to the development of such a mindset. In particular, teacher education programs in TESOL tend to rely heavily on teaching methods of language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar) and not necessarily focus on developing skills in entrepreneurship. Scholars (e.g., Khong & Saito, 2014; Reeves, 2006) maintain that teacher education programs are insufficient for ESL teachers to overcome all of the challenges they face. The European Commission (2012) also points out that "the core skills and values linked to entrepreneurship education are seldom a priority in initial teacher education programs" (p. 3); the commission also shows that approximately 90% of teachers would like to receive some training in entrepreneurship and creativity because their exploration of creative and innovative teaching methods is not fully supported in the school context. Thus, it is urgent to consider how to encourage TESOL teachers and educators to integrate the concept of an entrepreneurial mindset into

practice so that we can help multilingual learners gain learner autonomy and thrive as 21st-century citizens.

Pedagogical Applications in TESOL

In concert with the desire that exists to foster an entrepreneurial mindset in TESOL, a few educators (Özdemir, 2015; Pihie & Sani, 2009; Wilkinson, 2012) have made efforts to integrate an entrepreneurial mindset into their instruction and pedagogy in foreign and second language education. Wilkinson (2012) created a lesson plan about entrepreneurship and its place in society, i.e., "Entrepreneurs Are Great" (the lesson plan, worksheets, and materials are downloadable on the website of the British Council). The learning objectives of the lesson are to identify the meaning and use of vocabulary and idioms in the context of entrepreneurship, to discuss the importance of entrepreneurship to individuals and society, and to write a narrative about an entrepreneur's life and achievements. The author stresses that this lesson introduces context-specific vocabulary and idioms relative to entrepreneurship by developing multilingual learners' speaking and writing skills.

Özdemir's (2015) study shows an effective way of combining a theme of an entrepreneurial mindset with English language instruction. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners were given the grammar instruction with stories about successful entrepreneurs' achievements. Entrepreneurial attitude surveys were conducted before and after the instruction to analyze the impact of entrepreneurship motives in English language instruction on EFL learners. The results of the study revealed that incorporating theme-based activities on entrepreneurship in EFL classes have promoted the entrepreneurial mindset of the students. Although there is a paucity of pedagogical practices for an entrepreneurial mindset, it is evident that we should bolster the awareness of an entrepreneurial mindset for multilingual learners to enable them to be global citizens in higher education.

Pihie and Sani's (2009) study suggests a student-centered learning model known as an entrepreneurial directed approach. The participants in their study were 73 student teachers whose majors were either in moral education or in guidance and counseling; the entrepreneurial learning approach would be applicable to the ESL/EFL contexts in higher education even if the students were not multilingual learners. The results of the study show that an entrepreneurship education course enabled the students to improve their entrepreneurial behavior and perceptions of entrepreneurship through hands-on teaching techniques such as case analysis and class presentation and discussion. In their work, Pihie and Sani have implied that entrepreneurship education in higher education should consider teaching techniques that require students to have hands-on experiences with the entrepreneurial directed approach in order to promote university students' entrepreneurial mindset and increase learner autonomy.

Conclusion

This Reader's Comment seeks to provide room for enhancing learner autonomy by emphasizing an entrepreneurial mindset as a potential thinking skill and encouraging teachers, educators, and researchers to think outside the box in TESOL in higher education. The educational goal of preparing students to become innovative and accountable may seem ambitious, especially for multilingual learners in TESOL. However, it is promising that theme-based approaches of an entrepreneurial mindset and hands-on experiences with the entrepreneurial-directed approach seem sufficient in the multilingual classrooms in higher education. The vision of New York State TESOL is to advocate, advance, and enrich TESOL education and professionalism statewide through classroom practices, research, and program and curriculum development (New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2017). Aligned with this, it would be valuable for TESOL educators to deem practices of promoting an entrepreneurial mindset for multilingual learners valuable in higher education.

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